

quick facts

About...Rubella

What is rubella?

Rubella is a contagious illness caused by a virus. The symptoms are similar to measles and scarlet fever, but do not last as long and are typically mild for children and adults.

Rubella can cause serious problems to an unborn baby, including deafness, cataracts, heart defects, liver and spleen damage, and neurological defects. If you are pregnant and suspect that you have been exposed to rubella, contact your healthcare professional immediately. In some cases, rubella may cause miscarriage or stillbirth.

What are the symptoms of rubella?

Symptoms last about 3-5 days and include:

- Slight fever
- Drowsiness
- Sore throat
- A rash that appears on the first or second day, beginning on the face, and spreading quickly to the rest of the body
- Some swelling in the neck lymph nodes

How is rubella spread?

Rubella is spread through indirect or direct contact with an infected person's nose or throat drainage. It can be spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Who is at risk for rubella?

Anyone who has not received at least one dose of rubella-containing vaccine (usually MMR, the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine) is at risk for rubella. The risk for rubella in the United States is low, but rubella is still common in other parts of the world. Anyone traveling to areas where rubella is common or exposed to travelers from these areas is at increased risk for rubella. The risks of rubella are greatest to an unborn baby when a pregnant woman is infected with rubella.

How is rubella treated?

Because rubella is caused by a virus, antibiotics are not effective. Treatment is aimed at reducing the symptoms.

How can rubella be prevented?

If you have not had rubella, or have no record of receiving the MMR vaccine, talk to your healthcare provider to see if you should receive it. Most schools and licensed child-care facilities require proof of immunity to rubella for entry. It is important for women who may become pregnant to have immunity to rubella through vaccination or previous infection.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/rubella/in-short-adult.htm>.

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